

Dakota STEP Policy and Information Handbook

History

In 1985 the State of South Dakota began its testing program. Initial efforts centered on a norm-referenced test at Grades 4, 8 and 11 along with an ability exam at the same grades. The Stanford 7 Achievement test was the first test used. Overtime the testing moved to Stanford 8 and 9 with an experimental trial of The Metropolitan Achievement Test 7. The MAT 7 was not well accepted and dropped. Grade 2 testing was added with the introduction of the SAT 9.

The advent of NCLB ushered in the Stanford 10 Abbreviated which has been augmented in Reading and Math to insure alignment to the SD Content Standards. Students in Grades 3 through 8 and 11 take the augmented SAT 10 AB known as the Dakota STEP. Dakota STEP was first used in Spring 2003.

What is assessed?

Dakota STEP (State Test of Educational Progress) is the new assessment system for accountability in South Dakota schools. STEP has as its basic platform the new SAT 10 Abbreviated test. The SAT 10 Abbreviated test will be augmented to fully assess South Dakota Content Standards in Reading and Mathematics as required by *No Child Left Behind*. Science augmentation will be added before 2007 per *NCLB* timelines.

Dakota STEP will be given at Grades 3-8 and 11. The augmented SAT 10 will be untimed and will yield both norm-referenced and standards-based scores. Subjects that will be assessed by the abbreviated form of the SAT 10 (norm-referenced) will include Reading, Math, Science, Social Studies and Language Arts. Standards that will be assessed by the add-on augmentation are the SD Content Standards in Reading and Mathematics for each grade (2003) plus eventually the SD Content Standards in Science for each grade (by 2007).

State Law

SDCL 13-3-55. Academic achievement tests. Every public school district shall annually administer the same assessment to all students in grades three to eight, inclusive, and in grade eleven. The assessment shall measure the academic progress of each student. Every public school district shall annually administer to all students in grades five and nine an achievement test to assess writing skills. The assessment instruments shall be provided by the Department of Education. The tests shall be administered within timelines established by the Department of Education by rules promulgated pursuant to chapter 1-26 starting in the spring of the 2002-2003 school year. Each state-designed test shall be correlated with the

state's content standards. The South Dakota Board of Education may promulgate rules pursuant to chapter 1-26 to provide for administration of all assessments.

Test Security

Dakota STEP test materials are to be kept in a locked secure location until testing time. All Test Coordinators and teachers have to sign a security agreement prior to giving the test. Upon completion of testing, all test booklets are to be collected and either returned or stored as directed by the State of South Dakota DOE and Harcourt Assessment.

Misconduct in test administration

Staff administering the Dakota STEP test are not to provide answers to students, copy any portion of the test or in any way contribute to test security practices which violate the Code of Professional Ethics set for South Dakota Educators. The South Dakota Professional Teachers Practices and Standards Commission Administrative Rule Codes 24:08:03:01 Obligations to Students, 24:08:03:02 Obligations to the Public and 24:08:03:03 Obligations to the Profession provide direction for educators.

The Code of Ethics for professional administrators is cited in Administrative Rule 24:11:03:01

Unethical test practices

The following list contains some unethical test practices but activities may not be limited to this list:

1. Encouraging students to be absent the day of testing;
2. Encouraging students not to do their best because of the test purpose;
3. Using secure test items for instruction;
4. Changing student responses at any time;
5. Interpreting, explaining or paraphrasing the test item;
6. Reclassifying students solely for the purpose of avoiding state testing;
7. Not testing all students;
8. Failing to provide needed modifications during testing, if applicable;
9. Copying of the test in any way.

Penalties for late submission of assessment results

Delivery dates of answer documents is clearly defined in the Test Coordinators Handbook. Failure to adhere to deadlines may result in a school having to pay for their own scoring or in the case of NCLB accountability an endangerment to the schools AYP calculation.

Refusal to test

On rare occasions you may have students refusing to take the Dakota STEP either of their own volition or parental request. Please call the SDDOE for further direction on how to handle these situations.

SIMS

Each school has a designated student information system contact. This person will be your initial contact to clear up confusion about student information. In order to insure accuracy of labels and future disaggregation of data this system must be kept up to date. The SIMS data is used for all NCLB calculations.

CERVS

CERVS is the online verification process used by Harcourt to ship materials. It has a specific time frame when it is open. Information about this is provided by Harcourt and SDDOE at the appropriate time.

Assessment of students with disabilities

If a student is unable to take the Dakota STEP under normal conditions, a list of acceptable accommodations has been established. These accommodations are found in the Test Coordinators Handbook. Accommodations on the test should be the same as used in the regular classroom.

There are several ways in which students with disabilities can participate in assessments. These often are divided into three categories: (1) assessments taken in the same way as other students take them, (2) assessments taken with accommodations, and (3) alternate assessments. A small percentage of students with disabilities may need to participate in an alternate state or district assessment (**STAARS**) because their educational goals are different from the majority of students, even though they may be working toward the same state content standards. Test Coordinators unfamiliar with testing of students with disabilities should contact The South Dakota Department of Education, Office of Special Education.

Assessment of Limited English Proficient Students

If a student is unable to take the Dakota STEP under normal conditions, a list of acceptable accommodations has been established. These accommodations are found in the Test Coordinators Handbook. Accommodations on the test should be the same as used in the regular classroom.

LEP students in their first year of enrollment in a school in the United States will **not** be required to take the reading test portion of the Dakota STEP, if that student has participated in the State-mandated, Title III annual test of English Language Proficiency (ELP) the Stanford English Language Proficiency (SELP) test. Participation in the SELP test will constitute participation in reading for purposes of determining AYP. Students who enroll for the first time in a school in the U.S. after the testing window for ELP annual progress has ended in South Dakota, will meet participation requirements for reading through the completion of the LEP eligibility assessment of the LAS or the IPT.

Newly enrolled students will be required to take the state's mathematics test, indicating **participation** for AYP determination. The results of the math test for LEP students in their first year of enrollment in a U.S. school will not be included in the determination of AYP for the school, district, or state, even if the student meets the requirements of attendance for a full academic year.

Home School

SDCL 13-27-3. Child excused if provided alternative instruction --

Application -- Investigation -- Revocation -- Restrictions -- Testing. A child shall be excused from school attendance, pursuant to § 13-27-2, because the child is otherwise provided with alternative instruction for an equivalent period of time, as in the public schools, in the basic skills of language arts and mathematics. The parent or guardian of the child shall identify in the application the place where the child will be instructed and any individual who will instruct the child. The individuals are not required to be certified. The secretary of the Department of Education may investigate and determine whether the instruction is being provided. Failure to provide instruction is grounds for the school board, upon thirty days' notice, to revoke the excuse from school attendance. The secretary of the Department of Education may inspect the records of an alternative education program with fourteen days' written notice if the secretary has probable cause to believe the program is not in compliance with this section. The records to be inspected are limited to attendance and evidence showing academic progress.

No individual may instruct more than twenty-two children. All instructions shall be given so as to lead to a mastery of the English language. Children receiving alternative instruction who are in grades two, four, eight, and eleven shall take a nationally standardized achievement test of the basic skills. The test may be the test provided by the state and used in the public school district where the child is instructed or another nationally standardized achievement test chosen by and provided at the expense of the child's parent, guardian, or school giving alternative instruction. The test may be monitored by the local school district where the child is instructed.

The State of South Dakota provides the SAT 10 AB free of charge to home school students. Parents choosing another test must pay for that themselves.

Proficiency Levels

Scores on the CRT portion of Dakota STEP, Reading and Math, are reported in proficiency levels. Below are the descriptions of student performance related to those levels.

- **Advanced:** A student performing at the advanced level exceeds expectations for that grade level. The student is able to perform the content standards for the grade at a high level of difficulty, complexity, or fluency.
- **Proficient:** A student performing at the proficient level meets expectations for that grade level. The student is able to perform the content standards for the grade at the level of difficulty, complexity, or fluency specified by the standards.
- **Basic:** A student performing at the basic level performs below expectations for that grade level. The student is able to perform some of the content standards for the grade below the level of difficulty, complexity, or fluency specified by the grade level standards.

A student performing below the basic level is unable to perform the content standards for the grade. Therefore, no description is provided for this performance level.

Frequently asked questions

Q. How is the Dakota STEP constructed?

A. Dakota STEP will consist of five tests. Reading and Math which have been augmented. Augmented means that questions have been added to assure alignment to the SD Content Standards. The other tests; Language Arts, Science and Social Science will be SAT 10 abbreviated tests. They will be shorter in length.

Q. What about student ID numbers?

A. All schools will receive labels to place on answer sheets. The labels contain student demographics and ID number. The labels will be sent to you from Harcourt. This number will be matched to the SDDOE database so that disaggregation of data can take place.

Q. Will third grade students answer questions in their booklets?

A. Yes

Q. Will I have to do a lot of coding?

A. The only coding you should have to do is with IEP and LEP students. A new student without a label will require more extensive coding.

Q. Where can I learn more about testing students with disabilities?

A. Detailed information will be provided at the workshops. There will also be information in your Test Coordinators Handbook. The Office of Special Education 773-3678 is your contact for testing students with disabilities.

Q. Is it true that in order for an LEP student to be classified as such they must be tested?

A. Yes, they must be tested with the Language Assessment Scale (LAS) or Idea Proficiency Test (IPT) to determine eligibility. This identification process should be within 30 days of the start of school or in the case of midterm enrollment 2 weeks after such enrollment

Q. What about Braille or large print tests?

A. Contact the Office of Special Education for these tests 773-3678.

Q. Do private schools and BIA schools have to test?

A. All private schools and BIA schools that have tested in the past will continue to test.

Q. What about calculator use?

A. Calculators may be used on the Math Problem Solving test Grades 4-8 and on the entire test at Grade 11. A complete list of acceptable calculators is found in your Test Coordinators Handbook.

Q. What about document pickup?

A. This will be in your Test Coordinators Handbook along with packing information.

Q. Will the test be online or paper/pencil?

A. The test will be paper/pencil.

Q. What is the test window?

A. The test window is March 23 to April 15, 2005.

Q. Where can I find more information on testing?

A. <http://www.state.sd.us/deca/OCTA/testing/index.htm>

Q. How do I prepare students for the test?

A. The best way is to look at the essential core standards for Reading and Math and teach to the standards. Harcourt does have practice tests available at every grade level for purchase. Contact Harcourt Assessment Customer Service at 800-211-8378 for prices and ordering information.

